

University of California Cooperative Extension  
**Sea Grant Extension Program**  
San Diego County



## Selecting Underwater and Topside Maintenance Services for Your Boat

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### Selecting a Service Provider

The following tips can help you select a professional maintenance service that will protect your boat and the marine environment.

- **Ask your boat maintenance services to follow** marina requirements and use best management practices (BMPs) to avoid damaging boats or releasing pollutants into marina waters.
- **Ask your marina manager or harbor master for a list of service providers.** Some marinas may not be able to provide business referrals.
- **Hire a professional.** Ask to see the service's current business license & liability insurance. Some maintenance services may belong to a professional association that uses BMP's.
- **Ask for a copy** of the maintenance service's or association's **BMPs or standard procedures.**
- **Get three local references** from a prospective maintenance service or other boaters who know their work. Ask if they were satisfied and try to see the completed work.
- **Obtain and verify** the service's business address and telephone number. You may need to contact them in case of incomplete work, an illegal discharge or improper waste disposal.

### Explain Your Expectations

**Be direct.** Let the contractor know what you need and how it should be performed. The guidelines below will help you specify practices to protect your boat and the environment.

### Underwater Hull Cleaning

- **Wait 90 days** after applying fresh hull paint before having the hull cleaned underwater.
- **Avoid** underwater cleaning of vessels with soft, rapid sloughing or ablative hull paints.
- **Regular cleaning** prevents hard growth from forming.
- **Consider combining** low copper or non-toxic, hard or slick hull paints & regular underwater hull cleaning **instead of high copper content paints.** For more details,

see our publication, "**Selecting a Hull Paint for Your Boat.**"

- **Colored "plumes"** or clouds in the water near underwater cleaning activity **should not occur**; they indicate paint has been rubbed off your hull.

### **Ask your hull cleaner to...**

- Use only soft sponges or pieces of "carpet" to clean marine growth.
- Use stainless steel pads or brushes **only** on unpainted metal areas, **never** on bottom paint.
- Return zinc anodes to shore for recycling or proper disposal.

### **And for the Topside...**

#### **- Marina or Boatyard?**

Limit work done in the marina to minor maintenance. Take larger projects to an onshore service with proper equipment and pollution controls.

### **Ask your service provider to...**

- Use **biodegradable & environmentally friendly products**. Read labels & ask your maintenance service for more information.
- **Reuse leftovers** such as paints & varnishes for touchups or share with other boaters whenever possible.

## **Painting**

### **Ask your service provider to...**

- Cover water between boat & dock with visquine (plastic sheet) or tarp. Clean, dry & reuse visquine & tarps. Reverse boat in slip to work on other side.
- Mix only the amount of paint needed for the job. Mix paint on land, not on the dock; avoid dripping paint on dock.
- Use drip pans & containment trays to catch drips and spills. Have absorbent pads & thinner ready to clean up spills. Clean brushes on land.
- Seal containers tightly when not in use.
- Don't paint in a heavy breeze.

## **Sanding**

### **Ask your service provider to...**

Cover the water between boat and dock with visquine or tarps. Clean, dry & reuse visquine & tarps. Reverse boat in slip to work on other side.

Use a dust containment bag with sanding equipment. Sweep or vacuum all residual sanding dust and put it in the trash.

Don't sand with steel wool; dust makes rust spots on other boats, docks or equipment.

Plug scuppers to contain dust and debris.

Don't sand underwater or in a heavy breeze.

## **Cleaning**

### **Ask your service provider to...**

Avoid products with lye, ammonia, sodium hypochlorite, petroleum or chlorine.

Use soap in moderation. More soap doesn't mean more clean.

## **Exterior Teak Decks and Trim.**

### **Allow teak to fade to gray.**

Rinse it as needed with fresh or salt water to remove dirt. This reduces wear and tear from particles under foot.

**Teak trim requires different care than teak decks.** Varnished exterior teak lasts longer and provides more protection than an oil finish. Sand and varnish teak trim as needed.

### **Ask your service provider to....**

Use teak cleaners and soaps sparingly. Solvents in cleaners eat away at the soft grain of teak and damage seam compounds.

Caustic cleaners and varnishes should not be introduced to marine waters. Dispose of extras as hazardous waste.

For the look of freshly sanded teak that is easy on the environment, scrub teak decks with clean salt water and let the sun bleach them.

### ***Educational Use, Only...***

*This information is provided on an educational basis to assist you in choosing a marine service provider. Ask your boatyard, marine supply dealer, experienced boaters and government for local policies, regulations, referrals and any special conditions or practices.*

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Soundwatch, An Environmental Guide for Boaters (48° North); Rhode Island Marina Nonpoint Source Pollution Project (Rhode Island Sea Grant); Baywatch, A guide for Boaters (Environmental Health Coalition); Guidance specifying Management Measures for Sources of Nonpoint Pollution in Coastal Waters (US Environmental Protection Agency); "Building a Case Against Unlicensed Contractors" (San Diego Union-Tribune); Underwater Hull Cleaning Best Management Practices (Bear Underwater Services); "Three Ways You Can Savy Yourself Money" (Anchorwatch); Jim Haussener (California Marine Parks & Harbors Association); Members of the Steering Committee for San Diego County Boating & Nonpoint Source Pollution Education Program..

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